

Morris Lasker House

1718-1726 Broadway

(Northeast corner of 18th Street and Broadway)

Galveston

Galveston County

Texas

HABS No. TX-2100

HABS

TEX

84-GALV,

27-

PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

## MORRIS LASKER HOUSE

Location: 1718-1726 Broadway (NE corner of 18th and Broadway) Galveston, Galveston County, Texas.

Present Use: Demolished after 1967.

Significance: Lasker was a prominent Galveston businessman and philanthropist and his home was one of many Victorian mansions that once lined Broadway Street. The building was a fine example of the Victorian French Gothic style and the architect, Nicholas T. Clayton, was one of the outstanding professionals in Texas during the second half of the nineteenth century.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

## A. Physical History:

1. Dates of erection: 1889-1892. Lasker's house, preceding this one, was destroyed by the great fire in November 1885 and in 1889 he commissioned Nicholas Clayton to design a new home at this site. The building was begun late in that year and not finished until two years later, early in 1892. Total cost was reported to be \$22,000.
2. Architect: Nicholas J. Clayton. Clayton had worked in the firm of Jones and Baldwin, Architects, Memphis Tennessee, just before and after the Civil War and received his architectural training there. The firm had sent him to Galveston to supervise the construction of the First Presbyterian Church (recorded by HABS as TX-2106). Clayton remained in Galveston and became one of the state's outstanding nineteenth century architects.

Some of his most notable works include the First Presbyterian Church, St. Mary's Infirmary, The Galveston Pavilion, Harmony Hall, University of Texas Medical School and several buildings in the Strand District.

3. Builder, contractor, supplier: August W. Bautsch was the Galveston carpenter and builder who constructed Lasker's house. A contract for its erection was signed October 25, 1889 and four days later a sub-contract was executed between Bautsch and the brick masons, John and Mike Maurer of Galveston. The cost of the brick work was to be \$5,540.

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

Morris Lasker was born February 19, 1840 in Joracin, Province of Posen, Prussia and emigrated to Virginia at the age of 16. In 1860 he arrived in Weatherford, a northwest Texas frontier town where he clerked in a dry goods store. With the advent of the Civil War, he enlisted in Hood's Brigade and served in the battles of Galveston and Sabine Pass and later engagements in Louisiana.

Following the war, Lasker established a dry goods business in central Texas, first at Millican, then Bryan, then Calvert before being taken in as a partner in the Galveston wholesale firm of Marx and Kempner. A year later in 1873 he established a partnership with Louis Le Gierse and developed an extensive real estate business.

He was president of the M. Lasker Real Estate Company, a director of the First National Bank of Galveston and of the Island City Savings Bank and was involved in numerous other business activities. In 1912 he donated \$15,000 for repair and furnishings of the Society for Friendless Children Home, later known as the Lasker home for Homeless Children.

C. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Contract- August W. Bautsch and Maurer, BK 73/309/311,  
Galveston County Deed Records, Galveston, Texas

2. Secondary and published sources:

Galveston Evening Tribune. February 28, 1916, p. 9

Galveston News. November 15, 1885.

The Port of Galveston. 1890, p. 55.

Prepared by: John C. Garner, Jr.

Director

Galveston Architecture Inventory

March 21, 1967

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The building is a large, imposing example of the Victorian Gothic style. The plan is typical of the period with many projections and ells. The walls are stuccoed and embellished with intricate moldings, brackets and ornate window frames. It is a two-story structure with an elevated basement and a high hipped roof with dormers.

2. Condition of fabric: The fabric is presently sound; however, due to current disuse and lack of maintenance it is beginning to show signs of deterioration.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: The structure measures 60' x 75' in over-all dimensions.
2. Foundations: Foundations for the house are brick piers with spread footings.
3. Wall construction: Brick, stuccoed to resemble ashlar construction. The walls are treated as series of plain panels, set off by simulated pilasters complete with ornate sculpted capitals.
4. Structural system: All walls are load bearing and openings are both arched and trabeated. Floor joists are 2" x 12" spaced 16" apart.
5. Porches: A double gallery of cast iron paired columns and iron railing extends from the southwest corner across the front facade and abuts the southeast ell. There is also a small balcony on the east and west facades and a rear porch.
6. Chimneys: There are three brick chimneys, all integral with brick load-bearing walls.
7. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: Heavily molded double entrance doors.
  - b. Windows: Windows are of various types. Those opening on the galleries are triple-hung wood sash, usually two-over-two lights. Others are double and single hung. Those on the principal facades, the south and west, have both round and rectangular glass transoms.
8. Roof: The roof over the central block is high pitched, hipped and intersected with two front dormers and the gabled side ells and polygonal front extension. The gallery roof is flat. All pitched surfaces are covered by slate shingles in a diaper pattern. Valleys are metal, ridges slate. All original cresting and metal finials are gone. The cornices are bracketed with simple paired brackets and a simple frieze carries around the building.

C. Description of Exterior:

1. Floor plan: The floor plan is characteristic of the late 19th century with numerous rooms and all designed with great asymmetry. A small vestibule just inside the main entrance

leads into the reception hall (9' x 22'). This narrow rectangular space opens to the right onto the library (16' x 23') which forms the front room on the southeast corner. It terminates in a polygonal end bay heavily fenestrated that appears as a tower on the southeast corner. Sliding double doors connect the library with the dining room (17' x 24') that projects on the east facade. A door from the dining room leads to the butler's pantry and a polygonal ended breakfast room. The kitchen (15' x 16') and pantries are located behind the butler's pantry.

From the reception hall, again, through double sliding doors to the left is found the parlor and music room (16' x 27') with a polygonal bay projecting on the west facade.

The stair hall terminates the reception hall. Immediately behind this space is a back stair hall.

The upper floor consists of five bedrooms arranged around the stair hall and two bathrooms complete with hot and cold artesian water.

2. Stairway: Major stairway is located in the stair hall space, at the end of the entrance hall. Rear stair connects all floors.
3. Floors: Wood throughout.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Plaster with a wood wainscot of beaded ceiling material on all major halls.
5. Doors: Large double sliding wood doors provide access to all major downstairs rooms and between same. These have four panels. Other doors have three panels with transom above.
6. Trim: Heavy wood trim around all doors and windows, characteristic of the Victorian period.

D. Site:

1. Orientation and general setting: The building occupies the northeast corner of Broadway and 18th Streets, being lots 12, 13, and 14 of Block #197 and faces south.
2. Cisterns: A large brick, stuccoed cistern was provided at the northeast corner, under the kitchen.

Prepared by: John C. Garner, Jr.  
Director  
Galveston Architecture Inventory  
March 17, 1967

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

The Galveston Survey was jointly sponsored by the National Park Service, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation and the Galveston Historical Foundation Inc., and developed under the direction of James C. Massey, Chief of the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS). The historical data was written by John C. Garner, Jr., acting as the Director of the Galveston Architecture Inventory. The written data was edited for transmittal to the Library of Congress in the summer of 1980 by Kent R. Newell of the HABS staff. The photographs were taken by Allen Stross in the summer of 1967.